

United States Courts Southern

District of Texas

FILED

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

May 21, 2022

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Vs.

**Angel Cane Columbus
Alexis Guadalupe Lopez**

Nathan Ochsner, Clerk of Court
CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

Case Number: C-22-00614M

I, the undersigned complainant state that the following is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. On or about May 20, 2022 in Brooks County, in the
(Date)

Southern District of Texas, defendant,

**Angel Cane Columbus
Alexis Guadalupe Lopez**

each aiding, abetting and assisting one another, did knowingly or in a reckless disregard of the fact that an alien had come to, entered, or remained in the United States in violation of law, transport, or move or attempt to transport or move such alien within the United States by means of transportation or otherwise, in furtherance of such violation of law

in violation of Title 8 United States Code, Section(s) 1324
I further state that I am a(n) Border Patrol Agent and that this complaint is based on the
following facts:
OFFICIAL TITLE

See Attached Affidavit of U.S. Border Patrol Agent

Hector Villarreal

Continued on the attached sheet and made a part of this complaint:

☒ Yes ☐ No

Submitted by reliable electronic means, sworn to, signature attested telephonically per Fed.R.Crim.P.4.1, and probable cause found on the:

Signature of Complainant

Hector Villarreal

Printed Name of Complainant

May 21, 2022

Date

at

Corpus Christi, Texas

City and State

Mitchel Neurock U.S. Magistrate Judge

Name and Title of Judicial Officer



Signature of Judicial Officer

AFFIDAVIT

The information contained in this report/affidavit is based upon my personal participation in the investigation, which included, but is not limited to information relayed to me by other agents and officers participating in the investigation.

FACTS/DETAILS:

On May 20, 2022, a Border Patrol Agent, was working his assigned immigration inspection duties at the Falfurrias, Texas United States Border Patrol Checkpoint. At approximately 7:20 a.m., a black 2011 Dodge Challenger, bearing Texas license plates approached the primary immigration inspection area. As the vehicle approached his location, he noticed that the rear of the vehicle appeared to be low as if there was something heavy in the trunk. The Border Patrol Agent greeted the driver, later identified as Alexis Guadalupe LOPEZ. He asked LOPEZ if she had any other passengers with her. LOPEZ quickly looked to her right and back at him and stated "No, it's just me" Due to his previous training and experience of smuggling trends and tactics, he knew that smugglers would place illegal aliens in the trunk of vehicles and conceal or cover them with various items. The Border Patrol Agent then asked LOPEZ if she had anything in the trunk. LOPEZ just stared at the Agent and did not respond. He then asked once more if there was anything in the trunk and LOPEZ stated "No" while the Border Patrol Agent was speaking with LOPEZ, a Border Patrol Canine Handler and his K9 partner were conducting a free air sniff of the vehicle. The Canine Handler advised him that his K-9 partner was alerting to the vehicle. LOPEZ was asked and she granted consent to a search of the trunk.

LOPEZ then began looking for the mechanism to open the trunk. It Appeared LOPEZ was having difficulty finding the means to open the trunk of the vehicle. The Border Patrol Agent then asked LOPEZ if the vehicle belonged to her. LOPEZ, while still looking for a means to open the trunk, stated the vehicle was not hers and muttered something unintelligible. After fumbling with a mean to open the trunk, the Border Patrol Agent asked LOPEZ again who did the vehicle belong to and she stated "San Antonio." Suddenly, LOPEZ opened the trunk which allowed the Border Patrol Canine Handler to search the trunk, the Canine Handler then advised there were persons in the trunk of the vehicle. At that point, LOPEZ was detained and placed in handcuffs under the suspicion of alien smuggling.

During his inspection of LOPEZ, he took note of her verbal and non-verbal cues. When asked a question, LOPEZ would at times not answer the question and just stare at him. LOPEZ would constantly avoid eye contact when asked a question. When she would respond to questions, LOPEZ would give confusing answers as if she were not focused. LOPEZ was also looking around repeatedly as if she was looking for a means of escape.

Once in the secondary inspection area, two persons were removed from the trunk of LOPEZ's vehicle. The two persons were later identified as Josue Anahun PAZ-Guevara and Jose Len ARITA-Leon. They were both found to be citizens of Honduras and illegally present in the United States.

At approximately 0735 A.M another Border Patrol Agent also assigned immigration inspection duties at the Falfurrias Border Patrol Checkpoint encountered a Grey Toyota Corolla displaying Texas paper plates at his primary inspection lane. When the vehicle came to a stop, he asked the driver, later identified as Angel Cane COLUMBUS, where he was headed to. COLUMBUS responded, "I am heading to Premont." The Border Patrol Agent then asked COLUMBUS how long he was going to be in Premont. He responded, "For a week." The Border Patrol Agent then asked why he was going, he then responded, "For work." He then asked if COLUMBUS lived in the lower valley and he responded, "I came to visit my girlfriend." During this time, a Border Patrol Canine Handler was performing a free air sniff of the exterior of the vehicle, and he informed the Border Patrol Agent that his canine had alerted to the back of the vehicle. At this time, he then asked COLUMBUS for consent to look inside the trunk. Columbus said, "Sure." When the trunk was opened the Canine Handler informed him that there were two subjects laying in the trunk. COLUMBUS was then asked to turn the vehicle off and step out of the car. COLUMBUS was then detained, and another Border Patrol Agent drove the vehicle from the primary lane inspection area to secondary.

Once in secondary, two subjects were discovered in the trunk of the vehicle and later identified as Fredy Humberto MIRANDA-VARGAS and Rafael Angel PINTO-SANCHEZ. Both subjects were found to be citizens of Honduras and illegally present in the United States.

NOTE: A search incident to arrest was conducted on COLUMBUS. Documents were found in which were linked an individual (DT) to the black 2011 Dodge Challenger and a gray 2021 Toyota Corolla. According to a registration check printout, (DT) is the owner of the black 2011 Dodge Challenger. It was also discovered later that (DT) also rented the grey 2021 Toyota Corolla. The gray 2021 Toyota Corolla was used in an alien smuggling attempt by COLUMBUS which occurred 45 minutes after.

MIRANDA RIGHTS WARNING:

The subjects were read their rights in their preferred language and signed accordingly that they understood their rights. All the subjects provided a statement.

DEFENDANT STATEMENT: Alexis Guadalupe LOPEZ

LOPEZ stated she was contacted on the social media platform known as SNAPCHAT. LOPEZ stated she was contacted by a person named Vincent. LOPEZ later described Vincent as an older Hispanic male. LOPEZ stated she did not know Vincent personally but had been in contact with for approximately 3 months. LOPEZ stated Vincent or someone contacted her, via, Snapchat, to travel to the RGV area. LOPEZ stated she drove to the RGV area by herself on Wednesday evening using the same 2011 Dodge Charger. LOPEZ later stated she borrowed the vehicle from an individual (DT). LOPEZ later stated that (DT) owns the black Dodge Charger and owns other vehicles. LOPEZ stated she met with Vincent and during their time together, LOPEZ stated Vincent asked her to do a "job". LOPEZ stated it was not discussed of what this job entailed but was told something would be in trunk. LOPEZ stated she assumed it would be a person or people and not drugs. Prior to this statement, LOPEZ stated she knew or had some prior knowledge that Vincent and those possibly working with Vincent were in the business of human trafficking. LOPEZ would not state if she was promised payment.

Prior to the interview, LOPEZ was sitting in the chair that was facing the door. The door to the interview has a window which one can see through. During the interview, another interview had concluded and a black male subject, along with the interviewing Agents, exited Interview Room A. Interview A is adjacent to the interview room we were occupying. The other black male was identified as Angel Cane COLUMBUS. COLUMBUS was a principle involved in the other alien smuggling case. Upon COLUMBUS exiting the room, LOPEZ's gaze fixed on him, and Agents also saw COLUMBUS staring at her.

NOTE: After the interview was concluded, Agents were advised that COLUMBUS and LOPEZ knew each other. It was also discovered that COLUMBUS and LOPEZ were in a relationship with one another. Also discovered was that COLUMBUS and LOPEZ have completed other successful smuggling attempts through the Falfurrias Checkpoint. One message, discovered on subject's COLUMBUS's phone, referenced aliens being in the trunk of a car for 72 miles. A drop off point for those smuggled through the checkpoint was also discovered. All information was confirmed via, messages, reviewed on COLUMBUS's phone. Consent to view these messages were given by COLUMBUS.

LOPEZ- SECOND INTERVIEW:

Due to the discovery of new information which linked LOPEZ and COLUMBUS, another interview was conducted.

LOPEZ stated she left San Antonio, Texas on Thursday night (May 19, 2022) between five and six in the evening. LOPEZ stated she stayed at a hotel with COLUMBUS (COLUMBUS is the principal smuggler on the later event). LOPEZ stated she was going to drop off her human cargo at a Mexican restaurant in Premont, Texas. LOPEZ stated she was going to get \$2000.00 for her load. LOPEZ stated she was going to get a total of \$4000.00. When asked she stated she had two subjects in her load. LOPEZ stated she was involved in a romantic relationship with COLUMBUS. LOPEZ has referred to him in the past as her husband and has his sister (DT) number saved on her phone as her sister-in-law.

DEFENDANT STATEMENT: Angel Cane COLUMBUS

COLUMBUS stated he left San Antonio, Texas on May 19, 2022, around 5:30 P.M. COLUMBUS stated he picked up the rental car at a Bush's Chicken restaurant parking lot and the keys were left in the front seat with the vehicle unlocked. COLUMBUS stated a friend of his named Rich advised him if he wanted to make some money, he could contact his friend at (361) 677-1582. COLUMBUS stated he called the number and arrangements were made. COLUMBUS stated he stayed at a motel near McAllen, Texas. COLUMBUS gave agents consent to review his phone and the location of the motel is, 1813 E. Expressway 83, Mission, Texas. On his phone he also had the drop off location as, 619 S. Broadway St. Premont, Texas 78375. COLUMBUS stated he did this because he came up on hard times and he was told he was going to get \$1500 per person. COLUMBUS stated he left the motel around 0630 A.M. this morning and had knowledge from his contacts that the human load was in the vehicle. COLUMBUS then began his journey north. COLUMBUS stated he drove directly from the hotel to the checkpoint and was in route to the drop off address which is the same address that was texted to his phone.

NOTE: The rental car was rented by DT. During questioning COLUMBUS stated DT is his sister. During the search of COLUMBUS phone, agents discovered that Alexis Lopez had contact with COLUMBUS. Alexis Lopez is the principal from the first smuggling case earlier in the day. The phone also revealed that they have knowledge from previous attempts that the subjects would be in the trunk for 75 minutes.

LOPEZ Smuggling Case

MATERIAL WITNESS STATEMENT:

PAZ stated that he and approximately 7 others crossed the river approximately 4 days ago. PAZ stated that after crossing the border, via, the Rio Grande River, he was picked up in a pickup truck and transported to a house. PAZ stated he was transported multiple times. PAZ was told this morning that he was to get in a car to be transported north. PAZ stated an unknown person placed he and ARITA in the trunk of the black Dodge Charger. PAZ stated he never saw the driver. PAZ did not have a cell phone on his person or his property.

MATERIAL WITNESS STATEMENT:

ARITA stated he and PAZ crossed the Rio Grande River about 4 days ago with 7-8 other persons. ARITA stated he was transported multiple times until he arrived at a house. ARITA was stated he was told this morning that a woman was going to come and pick him up and that he should be respectful. ARITA stated he did not see the driver but was placed in the trunk of a vehicle by someone else.

COLUMBUS Smuggling Case

MATERIAL WITNESS STATEMENT:

Fredy Humberto VARGAS stated that on approximately the 17th of May 2022 he crossed the river into the United States. He stated he was picked up and taken to a warehouse. He stated that on the 20th of May 2022 an older man picked them up and drove them to a store. Once they arrived VARGAS stated that they were taken to another vehicle. VARGAS stated he did not have visual contact of the driver. Subject stated he was charged \$8,000 U.S.D to get to his destination.

MATERIAL WITNESS STATEMENT:

Rafael Angel SANCHEZ stated that on approximately 17th of May 2022 he crossed the river into the United States with Fredy Humberto Miranda VARGAS. Once in the United States they were picked up and taken to an unknown house. On the 20th of May 2022 SANCHEZ stated a tall man came to pick them up. They were driven to a gas station where they were told to get off the vehicle and get into the trunk of another vehicle. They did not have visual contact of the driver. Subject stated he was charged \$8,000 U.S.D to get to his destination.

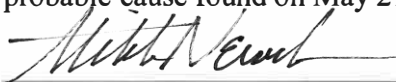
DISPOSITION:

The facts of this case were presented to the Assistant United States Attorney Office who accepted Alexis Guadalupe Lopez and Columbus for prosecution of 8 USC 1324, Alien Smuggling. Josue Ananhun PAZ-Guevara, Jose Len ARITA-Leonand, Fredy Humberto MIRANDA-VARGAS and Rafael Angel PINTO-SANCHEZ will be held as Material Witnesses.



Hector Villarreal
Border Patrol Agent

Submitted by reliable electronic means, sworn to,
signature attested telephonically per Fed.R.Crim.P.4.1, and
probable cause found on May 21, 2022:



Mitchel Neurock
United States Magistrate Judge